

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 17786 01 OF 02 161642Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 EB-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07 /086 W
-----161724Z 095151 /41

R 161624Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4250
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 17786

USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, FR, XG, EEC
SUBJECT: FRENCH ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
(ECP)

REF: PARIS 16878

SUMMARY: AFTER A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS JULY 14 WHICH DECIDED TO ENGAGE THE GOF'S
RESPONSIBILITY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND TWO DAYS
OF DEBATE ON THE RPR MOTION TO ADJOURN THE ECP BILL,
PRIME MINISTER BARRE, AS EXPECTED, INTRODUCED ARTICLE
49(3) -- SEE REFTEL -- ON JUNE 15 JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT.
IF NO MOTION OF CENSURE IS MADE WITHIN 24 HOURS, AND
NONE IS EXPECTED FROM EITHER THE RPR OR THE LEFT, THE
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PAGE 02 PARIS 17786 01 OF 02 161642Z

ECP BILL WILL BE CONSIDERED ADOPTED. THIS IN-
GLORIOUS BACK-DOOR RATIFICATION HAS BEEN DEPLORED BY
EVERY SINGLE PARTY, BUT IT IS THE BEST THAT COULD
BE HAD, GIVEN THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
THE RPR AND THE REST OF THE MAJORITY ON EUROPE AND
THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL STAKES AT ISSUE BETWEEN CHIRAC
AND GISCARD. IN ADDITION TO THE INCONCLUSIVE DEBATE

AND A RATIFICATION BY FORFEIT, A FINAL, BITTER AFTER-TASTE HAS BEEN LEFT BY RUMORS THAT RPR AND/OR PCF DEPUTIES INTEND TO TEST THE LEGALITY OF THE ASSEMBLY'S RATIFICATION BEFORE THE FRENCH HIGH COURT (CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL). END SUMMARY

1. FOURTH REPUBLIC REVISITED: THE PROCEDURAL MANEUVER OF ARTICLE 49(3) OF THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN USED 11 TIMES BEFORE DURING THE 5TH REPUBLIC, BUT ACCORDING TO THE AUTHOR OF THAT DOCUMENT, MICHEL DEBRE, NEVER FOR A QUESTION AS VITAL AS AN INTERNATIONAL TREATY. AND IN EACH PREVIOUS CASE, THE ASSEMBLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY AT A LATER DATE TO PICK UP DEBATE ON THE PARTICULAR SUBJECT. "INAPPROPRIATE" WAS THE THEME OF DEBRE'S STRONG INTERVENTION ON THE FIRST DAY OF DEBATE AND THE REASON FOR THE RPR'S MOTION TO ADJOURN DEBATE -- PROBABLY UNTIL NEXT SPRING. THE REST OF THE MAJORITY AND THE OPPOSITION HAD AT LEAST THIS MUCH IN COMMON WITH THE RPR: ARTICLE 49(3) WAS AN UNFORTUNATE ROUTE TO TAKE, BECAUSE IT CUT OFF PRACTICALLY ALL DEBATE ON AN ISSUE OF IMPORTANCE FOR FRANCE AND HER EC PARTNERS. A SIMILAR DEVICE WAS OFTEN RESORTED TO DURING THE FOURTH REPUBLIC, BY PARLIAMENTS WHICH WOULD NOT SUPPORT A GOVERNMENT BUT WHICH DID NOT WISH TO BRING IT DOWN AT THAT MOMENT. THE PRESENT ASSOCIATION WITH THIS EARLIER PRACTICE IS NOT A HAPPY ONE FOR THE CURRENT GOF. OPTIMISTS MAY CHOOSE TO ATTRIBUTE THIS SITUATION TO PERSONAL AND POLITICAL RIVALRIES BETWEEN CHIRAC AND THE RPR ON THE ONE HAND AND GISCARD AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 17786 01 OF 02 161642Z

REST OF THE GOF ON THE OTHER, RATHER THAN TO ANY INSTITUTIONAL DETERIORATION. MANY OBSERVERS INTERPRET THE USE OF 49(3) AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS BY A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS NOT ABLE TO PUT ITS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER.

2. CHIRAC OUTDOES EVEN DEBRE: SINCE HIS EARLIER CONCILIATORY REMARKS ON THE ECP SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, CHIRAC HAS CONSIDERABLY TOUGHENED HIS STAND. THIS WAS INITIALLY BECAUSE HE FOUND MUCH MORE SUPPORT THAN EXPECTED AMONG RPR DEPUTIES FOR DEBRE'S PROPOSAL TO KILL THE BILL IN COMMITTEE. CHIRAC CARRIED THE FIGHT MUCH FURTHER THAN EXPECTED IN A FIERY SPEECH ON JUNE 15, HIS FIRST IN THE ASSEMBLY SINCE HIS RE-ELECTION AS DEPUTY LAST FALL. HARKING BACK TO THE PERIOD OF HIS DIFFICULT RELATIONS WITH GISCARD LAST SUMMER, HE CLAIMED THAT: AS PRIME MINISTER, HE WAS NOT USUALLY PRIVY TO GOF TALKS WITH ITS PARTNERS ON THE ECP; HE ONLY ONCE DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM WITH A EUROPEAN LEADER (SCHMIDT) AND AT THAT TIME EXPRESSED HIS GRAVE RESERVA-

TIONS; WHEN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ADOPTED THE BILL
LAST JULY, HE HAD ALREADY SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION;

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PAGE 01 PARIS 17786 02 OF 02 161642Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 17786

AND FINALLY, THE ECP WAS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR
HIS LEAVING THE GOVERNMENT LAST AUGUST. MOST OF THESE
ARGUMENTS WERE EXPECTED; WHAT WAS UNEXPECTED AND
MORE SERIOUS WAS HIS TONE OF PERSONAL ATTACK DIRECTED
AT THE PRIME MINISTER, AND THROUGH HIM AT THE PRESIDENT,
AND HIS SWEEPING DISAVOWAL OF HIS FORMER BOSS. CHIRAC
SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN MAJORITY EFFORTS TO REACH AN
UNDERSTANDING OVER THE LAST MONTH OR TWO. HE SEEMS TO
BELIEVE HE FOUND A NO-LOSE ISSUE IN FRENCH INDEPENDENCE,
WHICH APPEALS TO THE NATIONALISTIC FEELINGS OF MANY
FRENCHMEN, AN ISSUE WHERE THE LEFT WOULD NOT COME TO
THE PRESIDENT'S RESCUE; AND HE PLAYED IT FOR ALL IT
WAS WORTH.

3. LEFT SCORES SOME POINTS FOR DEMAGOGUERY TOO: BOTH
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PAGE 02 PARIS 17786 02 OF 02 161642Z

THE PS AND PCF HAVE DEPLORED THE USE OF THIS PROCEDURAL RULE BY THE GOF TO AVOID A FULL DEBATE AND A CLEAR VOTE FOR OR AGAINST THE BILL. HOWLS FROM THE PCF AT LEAST SOUND A BIT HOLLOW. THE COMMUNISTS BACKED AWAY GRADUALLY FROM THEIR CONDITIONAL, LESS HOSTILE STAND ON THE ECP AND HAD SUBMITTED A MOTION IN THE ASSEMBLY TO RETURN THE BILL TO COMMITTEE FOR FURTHER STUDY AND FOR THE INSERTION OF INCREASED GUARANTEES FOR FRENCH SOVEREIGNTY. THE PS, GENERALLY PRO-EC, HAS HAD THE LUXURY OF KNOWING IT WOULD NOT BE FACED WITH A CHOICE OF EITHER VOTING FOR A GOF BILL OR AGAINST THE ECP. IT HAS HAD A FIELD DAY IN POKING AT MAJORITY DIVISIONS AND, THROUGH ITS SPOKESMAN, JEAN-PIERRE COT, ROSE TO THE HEIGHTS OF CHIRAC'S EXPRESSED FEARS OVER A FUTURE US-GERMAN DOMINATION OVER EUROPE. WHO WAS IT, COT ASKED RHETORICALLY, WHO ONLY A FEW MONTHS AFTER BECOMING PRIME MINISTER RETREATED BEFORE THE US AT OTTAWA, AGREED TO THE JAMAICA ACCORDS, AND SOLD PART OF FRANCE'S COMPUTER INDUSTRY TO HONEYWELL?

4. COMMENT: THE SAD, INCONCLUSIVE STATE OF THE ASSEMBLY DEBATE SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED, FOR EVERY PARTY GOT SOMETHING, IF NOT ITS MAXIMUM GOALS. THE TREATY WILL BE RATIFIED, IF ONLY BY 490 ABSTENTIONS. GISCARD AND HIS GOVERNMENT WILL THEREFORE BE ABLE TO UPHOLD THEIR COMMITMENTS WITH THEIR PARTNERS. THE RPR WAVED THE TRICOLOR. THE PS AVOIDED A PAINFUL CHOICE, THE PCF PRESERVED A SEMBLANCE OF EVOLUTION ON AN IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE, AND TOGETHER THEY FOCUSED ATTENTION AGAIN ON MAJORITY PROBLEMS. WHAT IS MORE TROUBLESOME THAN THE IMMEDIATE DEBATE ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHIRAC'S ACTIONS. WHILE SOME OBSERVERS PREDICT SMOOTHER SAILING IN THE NEAR FUTURE AS PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT ELECTIONS FORCE A CLOSING OF MAJORITY RANKS, CHIRAC SEEMS CONVINCED THAT ONLY BY CONTINUALLY SHAKING THINGS UP CAN THE RPR RETAIN ITS POSITION AS A DYNAMIC, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 17786 02 OF 02 161642Z

INDEPENDENT ENTITY WITHIN AN OTHERWISE LACKLUSTER MAJORITY. HE SEEMS LIKEWISE CONVINCED THAT IF THE MAJORITY IN GENERAL AND THE RPR IN PARTICULAR DOES NOTHING SPECTACULAR, THE LEFT WILL CONTINUE TO GRIND AWAY SUCCESSFULLY AT A SLUMBERING PUBLIC. AS IN THE CASE OF THE CURRENT DEBATE HOWEVER, THIS STRATEGY APPEARS DESTINED TO RESULT NOT ONLY IN ATTACKS AGAINST

THE LEFT, BUT ALSO AGAINST THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER
POLITICAL ALLIES AS WELL. ALTHOUGH CONSIDERATIONS OF
PARTY UNITY BROUGHT ON BY A SMALL BUT VOCAL MINORITY
MAY WELL HAVE COERCED CHIRAC INTO THE CURRENT EXERCISE,
HE CERTAINLY DID NOT HESITATE TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT
AND ONCE AGAIN BECAME THE SPOILER IN THE MAJORITY CAMP.
WITH THIS KIND OF LOGIC DEEPLY FELT IN THE RPR AND
WORKING ON JACQUES CHIRAC, THE EC PARLIAMENT COULD WELL
TURN OUT TO BE, NOT THE EXCEPTION, BUT ANOTHER MAJOR
IRRITANT IN A SERIES OF INCIDENTS WHICH WILL CONTINUE
INTO NEXT FALL.
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